ACCREDITING COMMISSION for COMMUNITY and JUNIOR COLLEGES

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Memo to: **Chancellors, College Presidents, Chief Instructional Officers, Accreditation Liaison Officers**

From: **Barbara Beno, President**

Subject: **Updated Timelines for Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness**

In September 2007 I sent you a "Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness" that was developed by the Commission for use by colleges as they do self-assessment, by teams as they examine college adherence to the Standards of Accreditation, and by the Commission as it evaluates institutions. This letter reviews the purpose of the rubric and updates the timeline for institutional achievement on the student learning outcomes portion of the rubric-Part III.

The purpose of the rubric is to provide some common language that can be used to describe a college's status *vis-à-vis* full adherence to the standards, as well as to provide a developmental framework for understanding each institution's actions toward achieving full compliance with standards. The Commission hopes the rubric will be a useful tool for colleges and evaluators.

For more than a decade, the Commission's Standards of Accreditation have required institutions to engage in systematic and regular program review as well as short and long-term planning and resource allocation processes that support the improvement of institutional and educational effectiveness. The 2002 Standards of Accreditation have added student learning outcomes assessment and improvement as important components to the required institutional processes of evaluation, planning and improvement.

As teams and the Commission evaluate institutional and educational effectiveness, these three areas – program review, the use of data and analyses to inform institutional planning and improvement, and the assessment of student learning – consistently emerge as areas in which institutions' seem to need additional guidance. The Commission, colleges, and teams have all indicated they need a device other than pure narrative for understanding and describing how well colleges have done in reaching full compliance with the standards. In the past, self study reports and team reports have reflected the authors' unique efforts to find appropriate summative descriptive terms to best communicate each institution's status. This rubric provides for greater consistency in those descriptive narratives.

It is important to note the sample behaviors described in each text box of the rubric are *not* new criteria or standards by which an institution will be evaluated, but are rather examples of behavior that, if characteristic of an institution, would indicate its stage of implementation of the standards. College leaders may find

the rubric helpful in assessing what additional efforts institutions should undertake to achieve full compliance with the Standards of Accreditation.

Finally, the Commission has announced the expectations with regard to performance discussed in the rubric.

- Institutions and teams should be aware that the Commission expects that institutions be at the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement level in Program Review of instructional and non-instructional programs and services.

- The Commission also expects that institutions be at the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement level in Planning.

- The Commission further expects that institutions now be at the Development level or above in Student Learning Outcomes, since these are the *newest requirements* included in the Standards of Accreditation. When it adopted the 2002 Standards, the Commission stated it anticipated institutions would need eight to ten years to come into full compliance with the new standards on student learning outcomes assessment and improvement.

- The Commission recently announced it will expect institutions to be at the Proficiency level in the identification, assessment and use for improvements of student learning outcomes by Fall 2012.

Of course, the ultimate goal is for institutions to achieve the Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement level in all three areas.

I hope that this rubric is helpful to you in your leadership work at your campus. The Commission welcomes any ideas for improving this rubric or its use to enhance institutional effectiveness.

BAB
Attachment: Rubric

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness – Part I: Program Review

(See cover letter for how to use this rubric.)

Levels of Implementation	Characteristics of Institutional Effectiveness in Program Review *(Sample institutional behaviors)*
Awareness	• There is preliminary investigative dialogue at the institution or within some departments about what data or process should be used for program review. • There is recognition of existing practices and models in program review that make use of institutional research. • There is exploration of program review models by various departments or individuals. • The college is implementing pilot program review models in a few programs/operational units.
Development	• Program review is embedded in practice across the institution using qualitative and quantitative data to improve program effectiveness. • Dialogue about the results of program review is evident within the program as part of discussion of program effectiveness. • Leadership groups throughout the institution accept responsibility for program review framework development (Senate, Admin. Etc.) • Appropriate resources are allocated to conducting program review of meaningful quality. • Development of a framework for linking results of program review to planning for improvement. • Development of a framework to align results of program review to resource allocation.
Proficiency	• Program review processes are in place and implemented regularly. • Results of all program reviews are integrated into institution-wide planning for improvement and informed decision-making. • The program review framework is established and implemented. • Dialogue about the results of all program reviews is evident throughout the institution as part of discussion of institutional effectiveness. • Results of program review are clearly and consistently linked to institutional planning processes and resource allocation processes; college can demonstrate or provide specific examples. • The institution evaluates the effectiveness of its program review processes in supporting and improving student achievement and student learning outcomes.
Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement	• Program review processes are ongoing, systematic and used to assess and improve student learning and achievement. • The institution reviews and refines its program review processes to improve institutional effectiveness. • The results of program review are used to continually refine and improve program practices resulting in appropriate improvements in student achievement and learning.

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Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness – Part II: Planning

(See cover letter for how to use this rubric.)

Levels of Implementation	Characteristics of Institutional Effectiveness in Planning *(Sample institutional behaviors)*
Awareness	• The college has preliminary investigative dialogue about planning processes. • There is recognition of case need for quantitative and qualitative data and analysis in planning. • The college has initiated pilot projects and efforts in developing systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning and implementation (e.g. in human or physical resources). • Planning found in only some areas of college operations. • There is exploration of models and definitions and issues related to planning. • There is minimal linkage between plans and a resource allocation process, perhaps planning for use of "new money" • The college may have a consultant-supported plan for facilities, or a strategic plan.
Development	• The Institution has defined a planning process and assigned responsibility for implementing it. • The Institution has identified quantitative and qualitative data and is using it. • Planning efforts are specifically linked to institutional mission and goals. • The Institution uses applicable quantitative data to improve institutional effectiveness in some areas of operation. • Governance and decision-making processes incorporate review of institutional effectiveness in mission and plans for improvement. • Planning processes reflect the participation of a broad constituent base.
Proficiency	• The college has a well documented, ongoing process for evaluating itself in all areas of operation, analyzing and publishing the results and planning and implementing improvements. • The institution's component plans are integrated into a comprehensive plan to achieve broad educational purposes and improve institutional effectiveness. • The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes. • The college has documented assessment results and communicated matters of quality assurance to appropriate constituencies (documents data and analysis of achievement of its educational mission). • The institution assesses progress toward achieving its education goals over time (uses longitudinal data and analyses). • The institution plans and effectively incorporates results of program review in all areas of educational services: instruction, support services, library and learning resources.
Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement	• The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning. • There is dialogue about institutional effectiveness that is ongoing, robust and pervasive; data and analyses are widely distributed and used throughout the institution. • There is ongoing review and adaptation of evaluation and planning processes. • There is consistent and continuous commitment to improving student learning; and educational effectiveness is a demonstrable priority in all planning structures and processes.

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Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness – Part III: Student Learning Outcomes

(See cover letter for how to use this rubric.)

Levels of Implementation	Characteristics of Institutional Effectiveness in Student Learning Outcomes *(Sample institutional behaviors)*
Awareness	• There is preliminary, investigative dialogue about student learning outcomes. • There is recognition of existing practices such as course objectives and how they relate to student learning outcomes. • There is exploration of models, definitions, and issues taking place by a few people. • Pilot projects and efforts may be in progress. • The college has discussed whether to define student learning outcomes at the level of some courses or programs or degrees; where to begin.
Development	• College has established an institutional framework for definition of student learning outcomes (where to start), how to extend, and timeline. • College has established authentic assessment strategies for assessing student learning outcomes as appropriate to intended course, program, and degree learning outcomes. • Existing organizational structures (e.g. Senate, Curriculum Committee) are supporting strategies for student learning outcomes definition and assessment. • Leadership groups (e.g. Academic Senate and administration), have accepted responsibility for student learning outcomes implementation. • Appropriate resources are being allocated to support student learning outcomes and assessment. • Faculty and staff are fully engaged in student learning outcomes development.
Proficiency	• Student learning outcomes and authentic assessment are in place for courses, programs and degrees. • Results of assessment are being used for improvement and further alignment of institution-wide practices. • There is widespread institutional dialogue about the results. • Decision-making includes dialogue on the results of assessment and is purposefully directed toward improving student learning. • Appropriate resources continue to be allocated and fine-tuned. • Comprehensive assessment reports exist and are completed on a regular basis. • Course student learning outcomes are aligned with degree student learning outcomes. • Students demonstrate awareness of goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled.
Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement	• Student learning outcomes and assessment are ongoing, systematic and used for continuous quality improvement. • Dialogue about student learning is ongoing, pervasive and robust. • Evaluation and fine-tuning of organizational structures to support student learning is ongoing. • Student learning improvement is a visible priority in all practices and structures across the college. • Learning outcomes are specifically linked to program reviews.

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